

Message Text

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S E C R E T BANGKOK 27185

EXDIS

EO 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, TH
SUBJ: GENERAL KRIANGSAK'S VIEWS ON NEW GOVERNMENT

1. AMBASSADOR ACCOMPANIED BY DCM CALLED ON GENERAL KRIANGSAK NOVEMBER 3. CALL HAD ORIGINALLY BEEN SCHEDULED FOR EXCHANGE OF VIEWS BEFORE AMBASSADOR'S DEPARTURE FOR WASHINGTON, WHICH NOW DELAYED TWO WEEKS.

2. KRIANGSAK GAVE LONG PROLOGUE EXPLAINING HOW, NOTWITHSTANDING HIS RELUCTANCE, HE HAD BEEN UNANIMOUSLY CHOSEN PRIME MINISTER BY REVOLUTIONARY PARTY, AND THEN BEEN PRESSED BY MILITARY LEADERSHIP TO CONTINUE ALSO AS SUPREME COMMANDER. THROUGHOUT CONVERSATION KRIANGSAK NOTED THAT FINAL DECISION HAD NOT BEEN MADE WITH REGARD TO CABINET POSITIONS, INCLUDING HIS OWN BUT HE SPOKE AT GREAT LENGTH ABOUT CABINET APPOINTMENTS, POLICIES, AND HIS OWN INTENTIONS WHEN HE IS PRIME MINISTER.

3. WITH REGARD TO NEW GOVERNMENT, KRIANGSAK SAID HE HAD MADE UP A LIST OF 29 NAMES FOR SENIOR CABINET AND GOVERNMENT POSTS. ALMOST ALL HAD BEEN ACCEPTED BY THE REVOLUTIONARY PARTY AND THE PALACE (READ KING). THERE REMAIN, HOWEVER, SOME UNRESOLVED CASES WITH REGARD TO THE CABINET, SPECIFICALLY, KRIANGSAK MENTIONED GENERAL BOONCHAI BAMRUNGPHONG WHOM HE HAS PROPOSED TO CONTINUE AS DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER AND NITHIPHAT CHALICHAN (MINISTER IN SENI CABINET),

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WHOM HE WANTED FOR AGRICULTURE. KRIANGSAK WAS NOT CERTAIN AS TO HOW MATTERS WOULD WORK OUT THOUGH BOONCHAI WOULD PROBABLY HAVE TO GET HIS POST, IF ONLY FOR INTERNAL BALANCE IN REVOLUTIONARY PARTY. SOME REVOLUTIONARY PARTY ELEMENTS AND PALACE HAVE EXPRESSED RESERVATIONS ABOUT NITHIPHAT BECAUSE OF HIS INABILITY TO WORK WITH OTHERS, AND BOONCHAI FOR UNSTATED REASONS. KRIANGSAK SAID HE WOULD LOOK FOR ANOTHER POST FOR NITHIPHAT, POSSIBLY MINISTER WITHOUT

PORTFOLIO.

4. KRIANGSAK CONFIRMED THAT FORMER SEATO SECRETARY GENERAL SUNTHORN WOULD BE ONE DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER, DEPUTY DEFENSE MINISTER LEK WOULD BECOME DEFENSE MINISTER AND FORMER FOREIGN MINISTER UPPADIT WOULD RETURN TO THAT MINISTRY. HE ALSO INDICATED THAT EGAT CHIEF, KASEM CHATIKAWANIT WOULD BE IN CABINET AS INDUSTRY MINISTER, AS WOULD CHULALONGKON UNIVERSITY RECTOR KASEM SUWANNAKUN (APPARENTLY AS EDUCATION MINISTER). IN MORE GENERALLY DISCUSSING QUALIFICATIONS OF CABINET AND SUBCABINET APPOINTMENTS, KRIANGSAK SAID THAT MANY WERE "PHD'S AND MA'S" AND STRESSED THE IMPORTANCE HE ATTACHED TO ABILITY AND COMPETENCE. HE SAID THAT NONE WERE HIS "CRONIES". KRIANGSAK GAVE NO FIRM INDICATION AS TO WHEN CABINET APPOINTMENTS WOULD BE MADE BUT SAID THAT CONSIDERATION OF CONSTITUTION WOULD BE FINISHED BY THIS WEEKEND WITH APPOINTMENTS TO BE ANNOUNCED LATER.

5. ON OVERALL GOVERNMENT POLICY, KRIANGSAK INDICATED THAT HE INTENDED TO GIVE FIRST PRIORITY TO THE WELL-BEING OF THE POPULATION AND CONSEQUENTLY TO IMPROVEMENT OF BUSINESS/INVESTMENT CLIMATE, NOTING THAT ONE YEAR WAS NOT VERY LONG AND THAT THIS YEAR'S POOR CROPS OF MAISE AND RICE WERE WORRYING. HE SAID THAT WE COULD BE ASSURED THAT NARCOTICS SUPPRESSION WOULD RECEIVE VERY HEAVY EMPHASIS. IN THAT REGARD KRIANGSAK SAID THAT HE WOULD PRESS FOR ACTION IN THE CROP SUBSTITUTION PROGRAM, AND WAS PARTICULARLY HOPEFUL FOR TEA AS A NEW CROP.

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6. IN FOREIGN POLICY, KRIANGSAK SAID THAT, AS UPPADIT AND HE HAD EARLIER PUBLICLY STATED, RTG WOULD STRIVE TO IMPROVE RELATIONS WITH ITS INDOCHINESE NEIGHBORS. IN THAT REGARD, HE SAID THAT RTG HAD REACHED AGREEMENT WITH CAMBODIA FOR AMBASSADORIAL MEETINGS IN VIENTIANE. (ACTING FONMIN WONG ALSO COMMENTED ON THIS. SEE SEPTTEL).

7. ON QUESTION OF ELECTIONS, KRIANGSAK INDICATED THAT NEW GOVERNMENT INTENDS TO MOVE TO ELECTIONS NEXT YEAR AS PROMISED. AT SAME TIME NEW CONSTITUTION WOULD PROVIDE "SOME FLEXIBILITY" AS TO TIMING OF ELECTIONS. IF NEW GOVERNMENT IS DOING A GOOD JOB THE NATION MIGHT WANT IT TO STAY ON A FEW MONTHS MORE. AT ONE POINT KRIANGSAK USED THE TIME FRAME OF FOUR MONTHS. HE ALSO TALKED VAGUELY ABOUT A PROGRESSIVE SCHEDULE OF ELECTIONS, BEGINNING FIRST AT LOCAL LEVEL AND ENDING UP WITH NATIONAL ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS. KRIANGSAK ALSO INDICATED THAT HE HOPED TO CREATE A SPECIAL ADVISORY GROUP OF POLITICAL PARTY LEADERS TO WHOM HE AS PRIME MINISTER WOULD TURN TO FOR ADVICE ON POLITICAL AND OTHER NATIONAL ISSUES.

8. AT HIS OWN INITIATIVE KRIANGSAK EXPRESSED THE IMPORTANCE HE ATTACHED TO THAI INTERNATIONAL IMAGE, PARTICULARLY WITH REGARD TO HUMAN RIGHTS. HE SAID THAT HE DID NOT THINK HE COULD DO ANYTHING ABOUT CURRENT TRIAL OF THAMMASAT 18 BUT HOPED THAT NEW GOVERNMENT

WOULD BE ABLE TO TAKE MEASURES TO BRING BACK INTO SOCIETY THOSE STUDENTS WHO HAVE GONE INTO THE JUNGLE TO JOIN THE COMMUNIST INSURGENTS.

9. AMBASSADOR WELCOMED KRIANGSAK'S RECENT PUBLIC STATEMENTS REGARDING AN EARLY RETURN TO DEMOCRACY AND THE ENDING OF CENSORSHIP AS WELL AS THE IMPORTANCE HE ATTACHED TO THE NARCOTICS PROBLEM. HE ALSO EXPRESSED TO KRIANGSAK OUR CONCERN OVER THE REFUGEE SITUATION AND NOTED THE DAMAGE THAT COULD BE DONE TO THAILAND'S IMAGE BY PROVINCIAL OFFICIALS WHO FORCED PEOPLE BACK ON BOATS AND OUT TO SEA. KRIANGSAK NOTED THIS BUT DID NOT APPEAR INFORMED.

10. IN CONCLUSION, KRIANGSAK EXPRESSED HIS WISH TO CONTINUE CLOSE RELATIONS WITH US REPRESENTATIVES AND AMBASSADOR ASSURED HIM OF
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OUR CONTINUED INTEREST IN CLOSE FRIENDLY TIES WITH THE NEW GOVERNMENT WHEN IT IS INSTALLED.

11. COMMENT: DURING DISCUSSION KRIANGSAK WAVERED BETWEEN COY COMMENTS THAT HE WAS NOT YET PRIME MINISTER AND FORTHRIGHT DESCRIPTIONS OF HIS INTENDED POLICIES, RECOMMENDED APPOINTMENTS AND EVEN HIS OFFICE SCHEDULE FOR HIS FIRST THREE DAYS WHEN HE BECOMES PRIME MINISTER. HIS COMMENTS CONFIRM THE BROAD OUTLINE OF THE NEW GOVERNMENT'S POLICIES AND IT IS CLEAR THAT KRIANGSAK IS PARTICULARLY SENSITIVE TO NEED FOR EARLY CLEAR PUBLIC AFFIRMATION OF THESE POLICIES. KRIANGSAK APPEARED CONFIDENT, UNHURRIED AND SELF-ASSURED.
WHITEHOUSE

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